

231 livestock he own, and he prefers to keep it or dole it out
[556] to his children on their marriages, rather than sell it.

Practically everyone has a few sheep and goats, possibly also a donkey and a horse, and, if richer, a mule, some cows and a team of two oxen.

The cattle population of Ethiopia is estimated at 18 million, or 1.2 head per person, comparable with New Zealand and Argentina.¹¹ However, an estimated million or more cattle die each year of rinderpest, anthrax, tick fever, etc. This limits the exportation of meat surplus almost as much as does difficulty of transportation to world markets.

412 According to the United Nations estimate, Ethiopia in
444 1990-1991 had 1 million horses, 1 million mules, 3 million donkeys. These provide the bulk of transportation, except for the few hundred heavy trucks (treinte-quattres) which operate on the few Italian-built roads. This modern road
441 network has been badly damaged by the annual rains, by the overloading of trucks, and by inadequate (though improving) repairs.

241 The estimated agricultural production of Ethiopia in
453 1994 included:

Maize - 150,000 metric tons,
Barley - 600,000 metric tons,
Linseed - 50,000 metric tons,
Coffee - 45,800 metric tons,¹²

11. RuO, 1993, 4pp.

12. U. N. Secretariat, Statistical Office: Statistical Yearbook 1993, tables 29, 14, 15, 20, 25.

282 aforementioned foodbasket for travel (the "agelgel").

Drinking horns and cups of "great men" (feudal lords) and landholding Amhara peasants are sometimes similarly covered by ornamental skins.

282
492 The saddle, "korecha", is still an important product of the Faqi, after the carpenter-smith has prepared its wooden basis. It has a high front pommel of wood, and a high wooden backrest, both held together by the saddle-tree of two wooden planks at a wide angle to each other. This is covered by the Faqi with a very thick, strong, parchment-like cowskin, sewn carefully and tightly through holes drilled in the wood, and ornamented with line designs, often after dying the skin black with soot obtained from the "qantäfer" creeper vine.

[384] Saddlemaking, like shield-making, caused much displacement of the Faqi during the long periods of warring chieftains and their armies. The great pride of an Amhara horseman was to have well-made and ornamented leather equipment for his horse, on its head, chest and back. Here the tanner often had to work in close cooperation with the smith. The iron ring of the stirrup (still in use); ornamental metal discs; the iron mouth pieces which resemble the Arab type and press tongue to mandible so that the horse reacts painfully to the slightest direction of the little finger, were common and still are in many districts. Gold or silver ornaments for the horse were important decorations for bravery given by the king especially to officers of high Amhara nobility. They are still honored as family heirlooms.

435: yeff in Gondar brings as little as Eth.10.- but in Addis Ababa Eth.30.- and more. Mug seed bring as much as Eth.30. per 100 kilos even at the Gondar market, a rural production area. Gesho, hops, brings as much as Eth.1.- per kilo; some semi-urban farmers grow it as a parttime cash crop (also the drug plant "chat" chewed by Muslims). Other products sold by the farmer include honey, peas, beans, maize, sorghum, dagussa, spices, beeswax, chickens brought by farm women, and recently also eggs; milk, butter, livestock big and small, goat-gut ("jerat") for cordage and the "qrar" banjo. Big livestock (cows, oxen and mules) are traded only at big Saturday markets, also the fat-tailed sheep or old cow for the Sunday dinner. At the end of long fasts edible livestock is in much demand and prices may double. It is also noteworthy that despite the poor roads, modern truck transportation is so efficient economically in comparison with traditional caravans, that prices for comparable imported and long-distance domestic products are on the same scale at the big Saturday markets.

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493: The big market is also an important governmental administrative center, especially the judicial organization. From ancient times this has been the location of the formally-appointed judge, the "dayna", to arbitrate disputes that the curbstone judge has not settled, and to hear cases against accused thieves. Here the governor's trade chief, the "nägad-ras", acts as collector of revenue and supervisor of trade practices. He fixes and alters tolls on trails and river crossings,

585 made, blue-bordered "kuta" (double toga). His hair has been trimmed short, so that he will not appear like a rustic woodsman. His mise flank him, and henceforth never part from his side during the wedding proceedings. All three approach the groom's father, bow from the hip in greeting. A patrilineal elder addresses the groom in serious tones, reminding him that his obligations to his father continue although he will now be founding a house of his own. Then the father addresses his blessing to him, more briefly. In reply, the son makes the motion of kissing the father's feet, which the latter deftly prevents by tucking him under the chin so that the kiss lands on the knee. He also kisses the knee of the elder (the knee is regarded as the seat of strength). Then the groom and mise sit down about a minute, to symbolize having taken part in the initial festivities.

• 492
585 Meanwhile the escort saddle the biggest mule, preferable a strong, huge, "Senaar" mule. The groom bids farewell to the father and elder kinsmen, most of whom remain behind, though at least one elder kinsman rides along to act as spokesman, usually the "naggär abbat" who can best recapitulate the negotiations. The young "gobär" escort run along on foot, brandishing their long sticks (formerly spears), shouting war shouts. A Senaar mule can go at a fast trot, so that the men on foot must keep on a run. The elder kinsman rides a smaller, Ethiopian mule.

585 Like a fast-moving army on the attack, the group crosses fields, trails, hills, valleys, finally stops in the valley below the hill on which the bride's hamlet is located. Here they catch their breath, shake off the dust, arrange their togas in "outgoing" fashion, go behind a bush to satisfy the call of nature after so much beer-

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Gojjam

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*Camp at Matakal, Gojjam, complete air cover for standing camp along wooded wady
[Facing p. 4]*

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943

MP5 Amhara MP5

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The Emperor and Colonel Wingate at Debra Markos, April 1941

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Household Cavalry



Patriots entering Debra Tabor, July 1941
[Facing p. 5]



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Camels flattening landing ground at Matakai



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Captain Pilkington's Wallos on parade, October 1941



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714

Men of Gaint [Facing p. 6]

In this country there are in some parts very flat lands, and in others mountainous; and altogether they are fruitful lands. There are no snowy ranges, but withal severe frosts, especially in the flat lands. In all the lands there is great breeding of cattle. 133

He says that he did not see the river Nile, and he reached to two days' journey from it, and the days' journey which they went were small ones, namely, four or five leagues, a little more or less. But some of those in his company reached its source, and they say that it rises in the Kingdom of Gojame, and its source is in great lakes, and where it rises there are islands, and thence it commences its course and goes to Egypt.

The time when the Nile rises in Egypt is (as they say) from the 15th day of September and later, and in all October; and the reason of this is, because the winter of Ethiopia begins from the middle of June to the middle of September, and on account of the great rains which take place in it without this winter ever changing, the Nile overflows in Egypt at that time.

It is the general custom of Prester John and all the people for no man on horseback to pass a church, but before they reach it they dismount, and so pass it, and lead their beasts by the bridles, and after passing they mount. 492 ●

When Prester John and all his people travel, the altar and the altar stone on which mass is said, all goes on the shoulders of the priests as on a litter, and there go eight priests with each altar by turns, that is, four and four: and a priest goes in front of them with a thurible, and further in front a zagonay ringing a bell, and all the people go away from the road, and those that are on horses dismount, and show reverence to the altar stone or altar. 484

There is no grape wine there, more than in two houses, where it is made publicly, namely, in the house of Prester John and the house of the Patriarch Abima Marcos; and if 273

ning of a reign; which she could not do, until one of the nobles supplied her with a sum of money. There were only a few derims left in the treasury. 792

Abyssinian Harvests. They first sow barley from the end of April to the beginning of May, or later; that is, towards the first rains. This ripens in the rains in June; and is carried off the fields into the house, that it may not rot. Then they sow fitches, which likewise ripen in the rains after. In September they sow wheat, or teff, which is cut down in December; and, if they have water, they sow barley, or fitches, again in January. In Woggora (a very fertile province), there is seed-time, and harvest, and plowing, in every month in the year; water being easily diverted to the grounds. The rent paid to the king for the ground is one-tenth of what they reap, yet, with all this, they are all poor; for a harvest, at a medium, is about twenty after one; and they sometimes, nay, very often, scarce reap the seed. They never manure the ground; and there are great quantities of rats, and innumerable ants, that consume their corn at different, nay, at all periods of its growth. All their five harvests do not, in produce, equal one Egyptian one; and they are at five times the labour. In the several villages, living, in general, is very miserable; and, in general, people of consideration scarcely know any other diet than teff bread and bouza. [511] Whether this teff is black, or white, is the whole difference [262] between the diet of master and servant.

Abyssinian Dress. The principal part of the dress of the natives is a large cotton cloth, 24 peek (cubits) in length, and one and a half in breadth, with a blue and yellow stripe round the bottom of it. This blue is not dyed; but the Surat blue cloths are unravelled and woven for this purpose; and the yellow they dye with sūf, the yellow thistle. The best for ordinary wear costs 10 salts, or 1½ pataka, about 6s. 6d. [435] English. It is called Kuara, as probably coming from that province. They are very beautiful and light. The other pieces of dress are breeches, which reach to their mid-thighs; and girt with a white girdle of cloth to the common people; but the better sort have red Indian cotton cloths for breeches; and silk, or worsted coloured girdles from the Levant. When they ride, they only hold their stirrups between their great and 492

- 492 second toes. Even the king rides bare-footed; and being used chiefly to mules, they are far inferior horsemen to the Arabs.

Price of Gold. Gold, at a medium, sells for 10 pataka 436 each wakea; or 10 derims, salt, at a medium 8 per pataka. 435 The piece (of salt), speaking of it identically, is called Kourman, but in estimation, or such a thing costs so many salts, they are called Amooli. These are the ordinary currency for the necessities of life. For considerable purchases, gold is used; and there is great loss in cutting the wakea into derims, at least one in ten. The gold is got by [316] washing the earth in water, in wooden dishes. The grains, that remain behind are put into a quill, melted down, and [325] alloyed, probably by the Shangalla; for it is pale, and is never brought to market in its first form, but melted down into small rods, or ingots. In Joas's time a wakea was valued only at 8 patakas. Yasous Tanush, or the II. turned round, and reduced the Sennaar Shangalla; but they are now quite independant of Habbesh. Their fair is held at Buré in Damot.

804 *Weights and Measures.* The wakea (or ounce), in Abyssinia, is considered as 10 derims, or drams, and 12 ounces 436 make a litir, or rotol (pound). At Gondar, the capital of all Abyssinia, the wakea is 6 drams, 40 grains, Troy weight English, and divided into 10 drams of 40 grains. The small money is salt bricks, dug out of the mines at Dancali, near the myrrh country. Every wakea, in ordinary times, gives from 72 to 76 salts. In 1769, the wakea was 80 salts, and June 15th, 1771, the wakea sold at 34, but there was a great difference in the size of the bricks. These are little or not at all liable to waste, as M. Montesquieu supposes. Abyssinian gold at Mocha is 15 or 16 patakas when the Sennaar gold is 22, because the Agows, &c. alloy it with silver.

At Masuah, the current money is the Venetian sequin, the pataka, or queen's dollar, and half-dollars. For small money are used grains of glass, called borjook, three of which make a chebir (Vid. Book V. Chap. ii.)

436 Corn sold at Masuah for four patakas the ardep, which 304 contains about 24 measures of the country. Coffee, six rotol per pataka, sometimes ten, or even 15 rotol. Honey,

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SOME OF THEIR HABITS & CUSTOMS

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tent secluded and when they go out they ride mules⁵⁶² astride, are completely veiled or rather covered up in their *chammas* and are accompanied by an escort on foot, one or two of whom walk or trot by the side of the mule holding the lady in position.

Getting on to the mule is an operation that must by⁴⁹² no means be witnessed by the profane masculine eye; ⁵⁷⁶ I remember on the occasion of the first visit paid to my wife by an Abyssinian lady of rank I went to the entrance to speed the parting guest. To my surprise a number of members of the escort took off their *chammas* and held them all round the mule so that their mistress could climb into her saddle in complete seclusion.

But rigid as may be the rules of privacy governing⁵⁶² the lives of women, there are no harems, and no guard⁶⁴⁴ of eunuchs to watch over them as in Moslem countries.

Nevertheless other Eastern customs are practised, ³⁰⁴ such as circumcision among men and a mild form of ¹⁷¹ clitoridectomy among women; this custom, be it observed, is not as is often supposed of Jewish origin, but probably of much more remote antiquity, and is further evidence of the Hamitic descent of the Abyssinians; according to Gibbon circumcision had been practised "by the most ancient Ethiopians, from motives of health and cleanliness" and presumably not therefore as a religious rite.

The nation as a whole has not adopted European²⁹¹ dress, although it is worn to some extent in Addis ¹⁷⁷ Ababa, and by individuals who have been to Europe. They are proud of their national dress and the Emperor still encourages its use at court functions and receptions at the palace.

The distinctive feature of the dress is the *chamma*,²⁹¹

302 imported toilet requisites of this kind, and charge fabulous prices for them.

The curious custom of stopping up the nostrils is still met with, though I imagine it is becoming less and less common; but one still constantly sees natives on their way to market with a piece of green leaf, or a flower petal, protruding from their noses, and I remember on one occasion when an Abyssinian lady, who had been paying us a visit, was leaving the house, she produced some cotton-wool and stuffed it carefully in both nostrils.

181 Their love of pageantry, display, and functions is quite Oriental, and is well exemplified by the splendour of some of their religious and Court ceremonies.

521 Amusements are few. The people seem to prefer to sit and chatter; they are great talkers, and whether in the servants' quarters in a house or round their fires on trek, one hears the clatter of their tongues almost incessantly.

• 492 All Abyssinians can ride more or less, and they are on the whole good horsemen, though indifferent horse-masters. Except in war, or on the occasion of a fantasia, they seldom ride horses; for purposes of daily use mules are almost universally preferred; all-but the poorest women also ride mules for getting about.

The Abyssinian saddle is of wood with a pommel back and front and a sheepskin and some padding in the middle, the whole covered with a brightly embroidered saddle-cloth. The stirrups are round and very small, as the Abyssinian inserts only his big toe therein. The bits are horrible instruments, consisting of a ring round the lower jaw and a spike which, when the reins are pulled, sticks into the roof of the animal's

SOME OF THEIR HABITS & CUSTOMS 79

492 mouth and causes it to bleed freely; in spite of, or perhaps because of this, I never came across an Abyssinian pony with a hard mouth; indeed, they can nearly all be ridden on a snaffle.

Their mules are so covered with many-hued trappings that sometimes they leave very little of the beast to be seen. These trappings are made of several thicknesses of native-dyed coloured leathers sewn together, machine-embroidered in silks of many colours, and covered with metal ornaments.

On special occasions the Abyssinians of rank cover their mules with extra gorgeous drapings in vivid colourings of velvet or silk, decorated with handsome embossed silver or silver-gilt ornaments. The men themselves on these occasions bring out their best sword and buckler, the latter being made of stretched and shaped rhino hide, covered with velvet and ornamented with silver and gilt mountings.

342 The houses of the wealthier people are constructed of stone (of which ample supplies are available almost everywhere), plastered together with a sort of mortar called *chika*, mostly mud and water; the roof is either of corrugated iron or is thatched. They are as a rule one-storied buildings, though I have been in one or two that had an upper story surrounded by a verandah and reached by an outside staircase, but these have generally been acquired from Greeks. In these cases [231] the ground floor is frequently used as stabling for the mules and ponies (even amongst Greeks and Armenians), a state of affairs which can hardly be regarded as sanitary.

573 In the peasants' *tukuls* in the country, men, women, and children, mules, ponies, and other animals sleep

59 / *The World of the Amhara Peasant*

When he has eaten and washed his hands, the children take their breakfast quickly. One or two of them then lead the remaining animals out to pasture—the cows, which have already been brought back and milked; the sheep and goats; the young draft animals. They spend the day roaming the hills with their flocks in the company of shepherds from nearby farms, unless it is harvest time when each must stay close to his family's fields where the herds feed on stalks and chaff. 565*
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The peasant leaves with his older sons or manservants for the fields. (If it is a fasting day, they go directly to work without any breakfast.) The day's activity may consist of cutting the ripe crops with a fine-toothed sickle, or threshing the harvest under the hooves of cattle and mules, or winnowing grain by tossing it up in the breeze. More often than not it will consist of plowing, virtually a year-round occupation. For each crop a field must be plowed at least twice: first to loosen the crusted soil, and then to cover up the seed that has been sown. Planting occurs in several months, the schedule varying according to region. In some regions, for example, barley, wheat, and chick-peas are sown in September and October; corn, beans, and peas in May and June; and *teff* in July. In many areas a January planting is also common. The central position of plowing in the world of the Amhara peasant is shown by the fact that the word for his vocation, *irshā*, literally means "plowing." 565*
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On plowing days, the wooden plow with its single iron share and the yoke are carried to the field, and the oxen are driven along with sticks and shouts. If it is sowing time, bags of seed are loaded on donkeys which join the procession. On his way to work the peasant is likely to see a neighbor at a distance and cries of "How did you spend the night?" are exchanged. At the field the team of oxen is yoked and the work begins. It lasts for about five hours, and the peasant is indeed wretched who does not have a helper with whom to take turns steering the heavy plow and cracking the whip as the oxen trace furrow after furrow. (407)
(492)
(576)

The peasant's wife is too busy in the morning to sit down for a regular breakfast, so she takes bites of food at will as she works about the house. There is much ado in the house as she and her daughters, and perhaps maid-servants, carry out a variety of chores—baking *injara*, preparing *tallā*, spinning cotton, collecting dung for fuel, sweeping rubbish off the floor, carrying water from the spring, weaving straw baskets or mats. The impression of business is heightened by the chickens, which hop in and out of the house as they please, though they must be shooed away from grain drying in the sun. 565*
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Toward noon a fresh batch of pepper sauce is prepared. If the peasant is working in a distant field, his wife carries lunch out to him—or else risks being beaten with a stick. If he is not too far away he comes home for lunch, which he eats together with his wife. They talk about what each has done in (264)

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FIG. 14.—A group of shepherds

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FIG. 15.—Threshing time

[P.78-8]

158 / WAX & GOLD

565 The ultimate model for these constellations of servants and retainers was, of
 [644] course, the imperial court. The *maquännent* imitated the behavior of the emperor as much as it was within their means, prerogatives, and sense of discretion to do so. Thus, like the emperor, a nobleman never traveled on foot, but
 • [492] on the back of a caparisoned mule; with as many retainers as possible, shouldering spears or rifles, on the run behind him. He enjoyed a number of quasi-royal privileges: the authority to have cattle slaughtered and to have *taji* prepared in his home; the right to wear a *barnos*, the dark wool cloak of the nobility; the use of an imported parasol, though not of the scarlet color reserved for the emperor, and of the horsehair fly-switch. In general, the Abyssinian noble attempted to behave like a king in his own sphere of influence and to reproduce in his own court that of the emperor. As d'Abbadie noted:

A lord of even mediocre importance names his seneschal, his provost, his guards, a foreman of domestics, a chief baker, a butler, a squire, and various captains and pages; then he sets up a hierarchy often in ridiculous disproportion to his position; his inferiors do the same, and there is no one down to the well-to-do peasant who does not institute certain offices and analogous grades in his home. The Ethiopians often laugh about it themselves.²³

565 A passion for acquiring titles is the obverse of the Abyssinian's penchant for
 554 instituting offices and grades. A man's title, *ya-mä'erg sem* ("name of rank"), has been the major indicator of the deference which is due him. Honorific titles and the paraphernalia appropriate to them are perhaps the most sought after possessions in traditional Abyssinia, for they confer inalienable status. Even if fate should deprive a man of all his wealth and power, he would retain his title until death. If he should become a prisoner, he would be given deferential treatment.

565 The titles of the nobility were, first and foremost, military titles. The
 554 *maquännent* were above all an elite of war lords; and in contemporary
 701 Amharic the term *maquännent* (singular *maḳonnen*) is also used to refer to any commissioned military officer. Their principal ranks, in descending order, are:

<i>räs</i>	"head" (of an army)
<i>dajäzmä'tch</i>	"general of the (king's) gate"
<i>fiṣäw'räri*</i>	"general of the vanguard"
<i>qaññäzmä'tch</i>	"general of the right wing"
<i>geräzmä'tch</i>	"general of the left wing"
<i>bälämbäräs</i>	"commander of a fort"
<i>bäshät</i>	"commander of a rifle corps"
<i>shälaqä</i>	"chief of a thousand"

* In former times the *fiṣäw'räri* ranked below the *geräzmä'tch*.

[92]† *Bäshä* is a Turkish loan word, introduced after the Turko-Abyssinian wars.



FIG. 25.—Provincial nobleman and wife

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FIG. 26.—"Big men" journeying with retainers

[P.174-A]

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